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Joyce E. Williams  
*Texas Woman's University*

Karen A. Holmes  
*University of Houston*

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IN JUDGMENT OF VICTIMS: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF RAPE<sup>\*</sup>

Joyce E. Williams, Texas Woman's University

Karen A. Holmes, University of Houston

ABSTRACT

This study examines some of the linkages between the rape victims' experience and community attitudes about rape, focusing on differences among three racial-ethnic groups. Public attitude data were collected from a stratified sample of 1,011 respondents; personal interviews were conducted with 335 Anglos, 336 Blacks and 340 Mexican Americans. Victim data were collected from in depth interviews with 61 female rape victims: 32 Anglos, 11 Blacks and 18 Mexican Americans. While the victim data suggest some degree of negative impact resulting from the rape experience for all victims, significant differences were found among the three racial-ethnic groups. Public attitude data suggest that public responses to rape are differentiated by certain age, sex and race-related categoric risks as well as certain attitudinal variations about sex roles. These findings are discussed in terms of how public attitudes may work to mitigate or exacerbate the negative effects of the rape experience for victims. Subsequently, an attempt is made to reconceptualize rape as an integrated composite of the public (extrinsic) and personal (intrinsic) experience of the victim.

INTRODUCTION

The way that victims react to the experience of rape and the manner in which they cope is determined in no small part by the responses of significant and generalized others. In fact, it can be argued that these reactions are an integral part of the rape experience. This work examines the empirical reality of victim and community responses to rape among three racial-ethnic groups. The broad research question is whether any linkages can be identified between victim-impact and community attitudes; more specifically, can the victims' experiences and the public's perception of rape be empirically linked, and, if so, do these linkages differ among Anglos, Blacks and Mexican Americans?<sup>1</sup>

This work is based on a theory of racial-sexual stratification. The underlying assumption is that the social world is sex and race stratified and, consequently, life chances are influenced by our designations as male or female and as Anglo, Black or Mexican American. In a social system which is characterized (historically

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and in terms of the status quo) by racial-sexual inequality, rape risks become predictable manifestations of power. Several forms of rape risks exist for males: rape (by legal definition) is almost exclusively a male crime; it is males who are the accused or convicted rapists; for some males, rape may represent the loss of exclusive sexual privilege and/or control over a woman; and rape "costs" other males (as husbands, lovers, brothers, or friends) when significant others fall victim. There are also certain emotional costs for women who know other women as victims, or for those who know men accused of rape. No doubt, however, the overwhelming rape risk for women is victimization or potential victimization.

The system of racial-sexual stratification has also produced minority and dominant group differences in sex roles and in male-female sexuality. Such differences have their roots in the oppression of slavery and colonialism and are maintained and perpetuated today by economic as well as racial-sexual inequality. Different rape risks and attitudes reflecting intra and intergroup sex-role stratification are further compounded by racial stratification and one consequence may be manifested in attitudes about rape. Rape is the ultimate proof of male power over females, and it is the final breach of barriers erected by society between certain racial and/or ethnic groups. These background assumptions with regard to the existing system of racial-sexual stratification suggest three hypotheses which are examined here: (1) The impact of the rape experience on victims will differ significantly reflecting variations in racial-ethnic community attitudes about rape and sex roles/sexuality. (2) Attitudes about rape will differ significantly among Anglos, Blacks and Mexican Americans. (3) Attitudes about male-female sex roles and sexuality will differ significantly among Anglos, Blacks and Mexican Americans and will be associated with significantly different attitudes about rape.

## METHODOLOGY

### Samples

The victim data are derived from in depth interviews conducted with 61 female rape victims: 32 Anglos, 11 Blacks and 18 Mexican Americans. These victims constitute an accidental sample of persons seen (with permission) through two rape crisis programs in a major metropolitan area in the Southwest. The time lapse between the assault and the research interview ranged from four weeks to over two years. The victims had a median age of 23 years (range=15-67) and a median education of just over 12 years. This sample was obtained on the basis of locatability and willingness to be interviewed, and on these criteria alone, our findings may not generalize to all rape victims. However, because of a failure to report rape (either to police or to rape crisis centers), the universe of victims is unknown; consequently, there is no sound basis for assuming that any victim sample is, or is not, representative.<sup>2</sup>

The public attitude data are derived from a stratified random sample of 1,011 residents of a major metropolitan city in the Southwest. Personal interviews were completed with 335 Anglos, 336 Blacks and 340 Mexican Americans; respondents in each of the three groups were almost equally divided by sex. Using the median as a measure of central tendency, the samples are characterized as follows: Anglos - 34 years of age, 14 years of education, family income \$14,400, predominantly Protestant in religion; Blacks - 40 years of age, 11.8 years of education, family income \$7,250, overwhelmingly Protestant in religion; Mexican Americans - 43 years of age, 7.8 years

of education, family income \$5,460, and overwhelmingly Catholic in religion. While the samples cannot be assumed to be representative of these racial or ethnic populations across the country, they can be cautiously viewed as representative of the Southwest. Specifically, comparisons between sample data and census data for the city where the research was conducted indicate that the two minority samples are representative of those populations in the city while the Anglo sample appears to be somewhat more middle class; that is, they are slightly higher in education, occupation and income than Anglos as a whole.

#### Measuring Victim Impact

As used here, "impact" is a generic term referring to the effects of the rape experience on victims. Seven independent and four dependent variables were used to assess the impact of rape. With one exception, the independent variables (age-at-assault; time-since-assault; victim race-ethnicity; institutional support systems; personal support systems; inter versus intragroup rape; stereotypic versus non-stereotypic rape) were developed in response to the literature which suggests that rape is a crisis or that it produces a crisis for the victim (Fox and Scherl, 1972; Burgess and Holmstrom, 1974; Mcombie, 1976). Unlike the other variables, however, victim race-ethnicity was not derived from the rape-as-crisis literature; in fact, it appears to be a variable that has essentially been ignored in previous victim research.<sup>3</sup> Its inclusion here stems from two sources: (1) the theoretical framework of stratification; and (2) the authors' contacts with rape victims which suggested that response variations might be related to victim race-ethnicity.

The four dependent variables - crisis response, feelings about men, health concerns, and general functioning - were developed as impact measures and each was examined in terms of the seven independent variables. (1) Crisis response:<sup>4</sup> Since most of the victim-related literature treats rape as a crisis, a paper and pencil measure consisting of 60 personal statements was used to measure victims' crisis responses (Halpern, 1973:342-49). High Crisis Scores (range=0-240) presumably indicate a greater degree of crisis response; however, because the scale elicits continuous rather than discrete data, an absolute conclusion regarding the existence of a crisis response cannot be made. Clearly, one can only conclude that a comparatively greater or lesser degree of crisis exists at a given time and caution should be exercised since it is impossible to isolate the rape experience as the single causative factor. (2) Feelings about men: A series of questions was developed in an attempt to determine how the rape experience might have affected victims' feelings about men in five interpersonal dimensions: communication, trust, non-sexual affection, general comfort, and sexual attraction-interest.<sup>5</sup> High FAM (Feelings About Men) Scores (range=5-15) indicate that victims feel better about men now; low scores indicate that their feelings are not as good now as before the assault. (3) Health concerns: Some of the victim-related literature suggests that victims have a variety of health problems after being assaulted (Burgess and Holmstrom, 1974; Peters, Meyer and Carroll, 1976). The Health Concern Score is the actual number of problems experienced by victims (following the assault) which they themselves felt were directly related to the rape;<sup>6</sup> scores could range from zero to 15. (4) General functioning: This impact variable was a second (but untested) measure of crisis which is theoretically consistent with the conceptualization of crisis as an inability to cope effectively and disruption of one's usual pattern of functioning.<sup>8</sup> General

Functioning Scores could range from -4 to +4; low scores indicate a passive or withdrawn style of functioning characterized by decreased interest or concern with routine activities, while high scores indicate increased activity with regard to involvement in routine activities.

#### Measuring Public Attitudes

Attitudes about rape. Responses to a series of nine rape vignettes were operationalized as attitudes about rape. These vignettes included two stereotypic street rapes, two bar pickups, two hitchhikers, a date-rape, a husband-wife assault and the rape of a prostitute. The vignettes did not use the word rape in describing what happened and the nine were varied in terms of theoretically important assault variables: reputation and activity of the victim, use of a weapon, injury, and relationship between victim and assailant (Jones and Aronson, 1973; Klemmack and Klemmack, 1976; Feild, 1978). With the exception of the husband-wife assault, each vignette described rape as legally defined in the state where the research was conducted. After reading each vignette, participants responded on a four-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) to the following: (1) Was this a rape? (2) Should the man involved be arrested and taken to court? and, (on a three-point scale), (3) Was the female involved very much at fault, somewhat at fault, or not at all at fault? Responses were conceptualized as a feminist-nonfeminist continuum where the most feminist responses were strong agreement that this was a rape, that the man involved should be prosecuted, and that the victim was not at fault. Thus, on any one vignette, scores could range from a low of 3 (most feminist) to a high of 11 (most nonfeminist). The three responses to the nine vignettes were subsequently combined into Rape Scores (range=27-99) and were operationalized as a general, undifferentiated attitude about rape. In effect, this measure "averages" responses to different kinds of rape (i.e., not only to those deemed "real" by the public, but also those which may be perceived as questionable) and takes into account some judgment of both victim and assailant as responsible and/or accountable. Therefore, Rape Scores were used as a measure of community attitudes about rape among Anglos, Blacks and Mexican Americans.

The social context of rape: independent variables. Fourteen independent variables - grouped into four general categories - were included in the data analysis. (1) Demographic characteristics: sex, religion, education, family income and age. (2) Sex-role attitudes (SR): Factor analysis of 25 items dealing with attitudes about traditional sex roles and with women's liberation produced three factors for each sample.<sup>10</sup> These factors represent ethnic-specific attitudes which describe some degree of sex-role traditionality or liberation; high factor scores suggest non-traditionality or liberation in sex roles. (3) Attitudes about male-female sexuality (M-F): Factor analysis of 13 items dealing with the nature of male-female sexuality and the dynamics of male-female interaction vis-a-vis rape produced three factors for each sample.<sup>11</sup> These factors represent ethnic-specific attitudes about male-female sexuality; high scores suggest that a greater degree of the attitude represented by the factor is present. Tables used in Table 3 and in subsequent discussion were derived from factor loadings and from the direction of responses. (4) Race/ethnic-related attitudes: Three diverse but conceptually relevant measures were used to tap attitudes related to the minority experience and/or minority-dominant relations. Victimization Scores represent the respondent's experience with rape/sexual assault and/or other violent crime.<sup>12</sup> Since statistics indicate that minorities are

disproportionately victimized by crime, this measure was treated as a race/ethnic-related variable. Discrimination Scores are a measure of how Black and Mexican American rape victims are perceived as being treated (by police and other public officials) compared to Anglo victims, and whether Black and Mexican American males are perceived as being unfairly accused of raping white females.<sup>13</sup> Intergroup is a dichotomized variable indicating whether respondents perceive rape as primarily inter (e.g., black-white, Anglo-Mexican American) or intragroup (e.g., black-black, white-white) or other (group identification was seen as irrelevant). Since the statistics on known rapes clearly show that the majority are intragroup (Curtis, 1975:69, 83), this variable was operationalized as a crude measure of racism vis-a-vis rape.

Reliability-validity of measures. There are inherent problems of reliability and validity in research which includes cross-cultural instrumentation and measurement. Every effort was made to minimize cultural bias in the collection of data by careful pretesting of the interview schedule with all three groups, using a Spanish translation of the schedule, and utilizing interviewers of the same race/ethnicity and sex as that of the respondent. The most likely source of bias is in the sex-role and sexuality items given that they assume a certain common frame of reference which may not exist; however, these measures were strengthened by using a separate factor analysis procedure for each of the three samples. While measurement bias must be acknowledged, it must also be recognized that this work is the first of its kind to measure attitudes about rape and sex roles across these three groups.<sup>14</sup>

#### Statistical Procedures

Crosstabulations, one-way analysis of variance and bivariate regression are used in the analysis of the victim data. Multiple regression analysis is the primary statistical technique used in the analysis of the public attitude data.<sup>15</sup> The Rape Scores were regressed on the fourteen independent variables in hierarchical order as determined by zero-order correlation coefficients. Betas (standardized measures testing the strength of association) and F ratios testing the significance of the Betas are used, as well as the F ratios for the overall regression. In addition, basic descriptive statistics are used as appropriate for both sets of data.

### FINDINGS

#### Victim Impact

Of the seven independent variables, only victim race-ethnicity was significantly associated with the impact measures; one-way analyses of variance indicated significant differences in Crisis, FAM, and General Functioning Scores.<sup>16</sup> Means, standard deviations and related score data for each group are shown in Table 1. Of particular interest is the consistent pattern of findings for each of the three racial-ethnic groups. Specifically, as a group, Mexican American victims appear to be the most adversely affected by the rape experience as measured here. Mexican American victims evidenced: (1) the greatest degree of crisis response by having the highest mean Crisis Scores; (2) the most negative changes in their feelings about men by having the lowest mean FAM Scores; and (3) the greatest tendency to withdraw from routine activities by having the lowest mean General Functioning Scores. Finally, although the association is not statistically significant, Mexican American victims

TABLE 1  
Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges of  
Impact Scores by Victim Race-Ethnicity

Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
<b>Crisis Score</b> *				
Anglo	32	113.4	21.2	40-141
Black	11	98.4	18.9	49-114
Mexican American	18	125.7	21.5	83-153
All Groups	61	114.3	22.5	40-153
<b>FAM Score</b> **				
Anglo	32	7.7	2.1	5-12
Black	11	7.1	1.6	5-9
Mexican American	18	5.9	1.2	5-9
All Groups	61	7.1	1.9	5-12
<b>Health Score</b> ***				
Anglo	32	4.6	2.8	0-10
Black	11	3.4	2.8	0-8
Mexican American	18	5.2	3.3	1-10
All Groups	61	4.5	3.0	0-10
<b>Functioning Score</b> +				
Anglo	29	-1.1	1.7	-4 - +2
Black	10	-0.6	1.6	-4 - +1
Mexican American	17	-2.1	1.2	-4 - 0
All Groups	56	-1.3	1.6	-4 - +2

Notes: \*Possible range=0-240; the higher the score, the greater the degree of crisis.  $F=5.87$ ,  $df=2/58$ ,  $p<.005$ .

\*\* Possible range=5-15; the higher the score, the better victims were feeling about men.  $F=5.27$ ,  $df=2/58$ ,  $p<.008$ .

\*\*\* Possible range=0-15 with scores reflecting the number of health concerns experienced as a result of the assault. Differences were not significant.

+ Possible range= -4 - +4; low scores indicate a change toward a more passive, withdrawn style of functioning after the assault.  $F=3.32$ ,  $df=2/53$ ,  $p<.04$ .

reported the highest average number of Health Concerns related to the assault. In contrast, the opposite pattern emerged for Black victims on three of the four impact measures: they evidenced the least severe degree of crisis, the least withdrawn style of functioning, and the fewest average number of health concerns. They did not, however, report the least negative feelings about men; Anglo victims held the middle position between Black and Mexican American victims across all impact measures except for feelings about men. On this measure, Anglos were the least negatively affected which represents a position reversal with Black victims.

While these findings indicate specific variations in how Anglo, Black and Mexican American victims were affected by the rape experience, it is obvious that virtually all victims suffered some adverse effects. The data seem to suggest that the differences found among the three victim groups are differences of degree rather than of kind. That is, it cannot simply be concluded that Mexican American victims suffered adverse effects while Black and/or Anglo victims did not. What can be said is that all victims were left with behavioral and emotional disruption in their lives, but the degree of that disruption differed when Mexican American, Black and Anglo victims were compared with each other as groups. That victim race-ethnicity was the only variable (among seven) significantly associated with the impact measures may reflect the relative uniqueness of the three groups; in particular, this finding may indicate that Anglo, Black and Mexican American women each bring a history of different life experiences and, consequently, a different style of coping to the rape experience.

#### Public Attitude Data

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and number of valid cases for each of the three samples on the attitudes about rape measure. The mean scores provide some quantification of attitudes about rape conceptualized on a feminist-nonfeminist continuum. Comparatively, Mexican Americans demonstrate the most nonfeminist attitudes about rape, Anglos the least, and Blacks are about midway between the two; all group means differ significantly. Anglos have the most dispersion of scores in relation to the mean and also a wider range than either of the two minority groups.

TABLE 2  
Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges on Rape Scores by Sample

Sample	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Anglos	335	46.03	8.15	27-85
Blacks	336	49.42	7.25	27-75
Mexican Americans	340	51.60	6.92	30-77

Notes: Low scores suggest feminist attitudes about rape. Scores had a possible range of 27-99.

Based on oneway analysis of variance,  $p < .001$  for all samples.



In Table 3 the results of the regression of Rape Scores on the fourteen independent variables are presented. Those variables which survived the regression are shown in order of their explanatory power in association with Rape Scores. The explained variance for each of the three samples ranges from a low of 17 percent for Mexican Americans to a high of 25 percent for Anglos. If public attitude data can be taken as a measure of community support (or lack of) for victims of rape, what do these findings suggest in relation to each of the three samples and the variations in victim impact? Since Mexican American victims evidenced the most adverse impact from the rape experience and the Mexican American sample has the highest mean Rape Scores, these data are examined first.

TABLE 3  
Regression of Selected Demographic and Sex-Race Related Variables  
on Rape Scores for Three Samples

ANGLOS			
	Beta	F Ratio	R <sup>2</sup>
Female Responsibility (M-F 3)	-.229	16.92***	.132
Skepticism (M-F 2)	-.166	9.49**	.164
Sex	.206	11.46***	.195
Male-Female Sexuality (M-F 1)	-.119	5.28*	.206
Sex-Role Liberation (SR 1)	-.100	3.38	.216
Sex-Role Freedom-Equality (SR 2)	-.090	2.21	.224
Intergroup	.100	3.75	.232
Victimization	-.091	3.15	.239
Stereotypic Sex-Role Attributes (SR 3)	-.090	2.76	.246
Overall F = 11.45*** (df=9/316)			
BLACKS			
Victim-Defined Rape (M-F 3)	.218	11.95***	.111
Modified Sex-Role Liberation (SR 2)	-.220	15.71***	.139
Female Responsibility-Blame (M-F 2)	-.100	2.40	.175
Sex	-.076	1.10	.185
Age	-.118	4.39*	.192
Nontraditionality in Sex Roles (SR 1)	-.132	4.71*	.203
Victimization	.093	2.81	.211
Overall F = 10.71*** (df=7/281)			
MEXICAN AMERICANS			
Traditional Female Role (SR 3)	-.303	30.17***	.098
Sex	-.183	8.46**	.119

TABLE 3 (continued)

	MEXICAN AMERICANS		
	Beta	F Ratio	R <sup>2</sup>
Sick Rapist (M-F 3)	.133	6.00*	.134
Intergroup	.130	5.50*	.146
Discrimination	-.112	4.31*	.156
Age	-.105	3.83*	.163
Male-Female Sexuality (M-F 1)	.105	2.73	.171
Overall F = 8.93 (df=7/303)			

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

\*\*\*p<.001

Mexican Americans. As shown in Table 3, six variables are significant predictors of Rape Scores for Mexican Americans. The most powerful predictor of nonfeminist attitudes about rape is a strong belief in the traditional sex role for women (SR 3). The belief that men who rape are sick, emotionally disturbed woman-haters (M-F 3) is significantly linked with feminist attitudes about rape. However, such a belief may, in fact, amount to a lack of support for victims; while not judging the victim negatively, those who see rapists as sick may "excuse" the behavior and discourage legal recourse. Two findings related to racial-ethnic relations suggest that the issue of rape is clouded with ambivalence because of concern for minority males as accused rapists as well as for females as victims. Perception of rape as primarily an intergroup phenomenon is associated with nonfeminist rape attitudes and may reflect defensive support for Mexican American males accused of raping Anglo women. High perceived discrimination (toward minority victims and accused offenders) is linked with feminist attitudes. This finding may simply reflect the congruence of an awareness of racism and sexism converging in rape - a dual concern for minority males as accused rapists and for females as victims.

The two demographic variables significantly associated with attitudes about rape for Mexican Americans are age and sex. As might be expected, females hold more feminist attitudes than males and older persons are more feminist than younger ones. While the latter finding may be unexpected, it is consistent with our initial assumptions about rape risks. Younger persons (especially minorities) are more at-risk (males as accused rapists, females as victims); older persons - further removed from the threat - can "afford" to be more tolerant and understanding in their judgments about rape.

These findings from the Mexican American community indicate diverse sources of nonfeminist attitudes about rape, stemming from those who hold a strong belief in the traditional role for women, and from males and younger persons. Those attitudes associated with feminist attitudes about rape seem to represent a general "liberal" or humanitarian concern for "sick" rapists, and for minorities - both victims and assailants.

Blacks. While Black victims evidenced the least negative impact, Rape Scores (Table 2) from the Black sample were not the most feminist. The Black community appears to be more feminist than the Mexican American community in judgments about rape, but less so than Anglos. Four variables are significant predictors of Rape Scores for Blacks (see Table 3). The most powerful predictor of nonfeminist attitudes is a tendency to define rape (as real or nonreal) in terms of the victim's reputation (M-F 3). An almost equally powerful predictor of feminist attitudes is a cluster of attitudes relating largely to women's liberation but intermingled with traces of sex-role traditionality (SR 2). A rejection of stereotypic male-female sex roles (SR 1) is also significantly associated with feminist attitudes about rape. The only demographic variable significantly linked with attitudes about rape is age where older persons are more feminist than younger ones, presumably for the same reasons suggested with regard to Mexican Americans - the reduced rape risk which comes with age.

The importance of defining rape in terms of the victim's reputation suggests that, to some degree, the Black community sees rape as a function of who the victim is - no doubt a concession to the abuse Black males have historically suffered when the charge of interracial rape was used as a tactic of racial oppression (Brownmiller, 1975:220-82). Given the history of rape vis-a-vis the Black community, it is understandable that before passing judgment on an alleged rape, the victim is subjected to scrutiny and this is what Victim-Defined Rape (M-F 3) seems to indicate. However, in the Black community, there are other themes associated with feminist attitudes about rape: nontraditionality in sex roles and a modified version of women's liberation. These indicate that nonrestrictive sex roles are identifiably linked with judgments about rape and they may be potential sources of support for the victim.

Anglos. Based on the public attitude data, Anglos hold the most feminist attitudes about rape; yet Anglo victims were not the least negatively affected by the rape experience. While Anglos may generally be more feminist in their attitudes than the two minority samples, the data from the Anglo sample suggest almost unilateral anti-feminist attitudes (about sex roles/sexuality) associated with nonfeminist judgments about rape. Four variables predict Rape Scores for Anglos (Table 3). The most powerful predictor of nonfeminist attitudes is a tendency to hold females responsible for rape by their failure to fight or resist an assailant and/or because their behavior or appearance is seen as provoking the attack (M-F 3). A general skepticism (M-F 2) or doubt that women can be raped unless they want to be or unless a weapon is used is also significantly linked with nonfeminist attitudes about rape, as is the belief that the dynamics of male-female interaction (M-F 1) are such that rape is integral to sexuality itself. Expressed in the vernacular of the area, these three findings seem to reflect the attitude that women (consciously or unconsciously) "ask for it" and "men will be men."

The only demographic variable significantly linked with attitudes about rape is sex where males are more feminist in their beliefs than females. This finding is contrary to that of both Blacks and Mexican Americans (see Table 3) where females were more feminist in their attitudes about rape than their male counterparts. Again, however, the data are consistent with our initial assumptions about rape risks. In a system of racial-sexual stratification, white males exercise the most control over the system in which they live and over the events of their daily lives. Of all the

groups surveyed, they are the least threatened by rape risks, especially the most direct rape risk for a male being formally charged with rape. As shown in the 1980 Uniform Crime Report, 47.7 percent of all persons arrested for rape were Black, more than four times the Black representation in the population at large. Since our Anglo sample was largely middle class, the threat of knowing a rape victim or of being charged with rape is less than for minorities or persons of lower socio-economic groups who are, in general, more familiar with crime.

Taken together, the variables which best predict nonfeminist attitudes about rape for Anglos depict a community of nonsupport for victims and the theme is very consistent. Rape is not clearly differentiated from the dynamics of normal male-female sexuality; there is skepticism that a woman can really be raped and - if she is - there is a tendency to blame her for her own victimization; and, females were more likely to hold these attitudes than were males.

### ANALYSIS

Since this is the first attempt to study both victim impact and attitudes about rape across these three racial-ethnic groups, the findings should be cautiously interpreted in light of the following methodological limitations: (1) the two sets of data were collected in different ways and for different purposes; (2) the instrumentation of concepts across three racial-ethnic groups may have resulted in the measurement of different phenomena; (3) the victim sample, because of size and selection, may not generalize to the racial-ethnic groups represented. Despite these limitations, however, the findings provide some basis for a tentative reconceptualization of the rape experience. For example, while the crisis-related victim literature treats victim impact as an individual response (or set of responses) to a single event (the rape), structural variables such as race-ethnicity are overlooked. Also disregarded is the wider social environment which predetermines certain rape risks and which the individual has to some degree internalized as the social context where the reality of everyday life is experienced. The following analysis is an effort to reconceptualize rape as comprised of the interaction of both intrinsic and extrinsic meaning, where victim impact can either be mitigated or exacerbated by the presence or absence of community support. From this perspective, the predictors of public attitudes about rape - the most powerful of which are sex role/sexuality and minority-role related - may be viewed as loci of support (feminist attitudes) or nonsupport (nonfeminist attitudes).

There are six loci of support/nonsupport for rape victims in the Mexican American community, the most important of which is related to sex roles; another relates to attitudes about male-female sexuality; two other loci are categoric and two are related to race-ethnicity. The empirical linkages suggest that attitudinal support for a traditional female role, the belief that rape is an intergroup phenomenon, and the categoric risks of being young and male represent cross-pressures in the community; consequently, they are potential sources of nonsupport for victims. Two other empirical linkages - high perceived minority discrimination (particularly against males) and perceptions of rapists as mentally ill - combined with feminist attitudes about rape indicate potential support for victims. However, the tendency to "psychologize" about the rapist and to verbalize discrimination, despite their linkage with feminist judgments about rape, may simply represent a congruence of liberal-

humanitarian social consciousness where concern for rape victims is only one thread of a tapestry of concern for all victims in the minority community. Such attitudes may not provide adequate support for rape victims in terms of mitigating the trouble which emanates from other attitudes and categoric risks.

There are four loci of nonsupport in the Anglo community, three of which are clearly interrelated, evolving from attitudes about male-female sexuality: the belief that responsibility for rape rests with the female; skepticism about the reality of rape; and the belief that rape is simply an extension of normal male-female sexuality. The one other locus of nonsupport for rape victims is the sex category in that females are more nonfeminist than males. Viewed another way, males are a potential source of support because they tend to be more feminist in their attitudes about rape than females, presumably because they are comparatively free (in comparison with minority males and all females) of rape risks. There are two loci of nonsupport for rape victims in the Black community: the tendency to define rape via the victim's reputation, and the younger age group. There are, on the other hand, two sources of support which surface to yield feminist judgments about rape: liberation and nontraditionality in sex roles.

Thus far, some linkages have been established between the victim and public attitude findings. Where Mexican American victims suffered the most severe degree of impact among the three groups, it appears that public attitudes about rape in the Mexican American community may represent an integral part of the victim's experience. Not only are the loci of nonsupport more diverse than those found among Anglos and Blacks creating cross-pressures which emanate from attitudes and categoric risks - but there are few mitigating or even balancing loci of support. To a great extent, Anglo victims are in the same kind of community atmosphere. There are several loci of nonsupport, but only one potential locus of support - the comparatively more feminist attitudes of Anglo males - to mitigate the impact of the rape experience. The Anglo and Mexican American communities differ, however, in that the Anglo loci are interrelated, representing different nuances of a similar anti-feminist theme with regard to male-female sexuality. In effect, the Anglo public attitude findings represent compounded anti-feminist sentiments. Thus, Anglo rape victims face a community of nonsupport similar to that faced by Mexican Americans, the only difference being that the sources of nonsupport are more unidimensional and are not compounded by minority vulnerability and risk factors. While Black victims manifested the least negative impact from the rape experience as compared with Anglo and Mexican American victims, their limited number in our sample makes definitive conclusions risky. However, the predictors of attitudes about rape in the Black community differ in substance from those of the other two communities, and there are more identifiable loci of support present. Thus, attitudes in the Black community appear to be at least potentially supportive of rape victims.

#### SUMMARY

Three hypotheses were examined in this work. First, significant differences were found in the severity of impact experienced by victims; when compared as groups, Mexican American victims suffered the greatest degree of negative impact, followed by Anglo, then Black victims. These variations appear to support a linkage between victim responses (impact) and community attitudes about rape. Second, public attitudes

about rape were found to differ significantly among the Anglo, Black and Mexican American samples. Specifically, attitudes are differentiated by certain age, sex, and race-related categoric risks, some of which apparently interact to produce compounded threats. (1) Among both Blacks and Mexican Americans, the old are apparently less threatened (as evidenced by more feminist attitudes) by rape than the young. (2) Minority males perceive more threat in relation to rape (as accused rapists) than do minority females. (3) Anglo males make comparatively feminist judgments about rape, presumably because they are relatively secure from any threat of rape. In addition, perceived minority discrimination vis-a-vis rape is apparently a factor in shaping attitudes about rape among Mexican Americans and Blacks as evidenced by: (1) the significance among Mexican Americans of perceived discriminatory treatment of minorities as rape victims and as accused intergroup rapists; (2) the significance of rape perceived as an intergroup phenomenon by Mexican Americans; (3) the tendency of Blacks to define rape in terms of the reputation of the victim, an attitude which appears to be more race than sex-related.

With respect to the third hypothesis, it is clear that public attitudes about rape are shaped to a significant degree by expectations related to sex-role behavior and/or beliefs about the dynamics of male-female sexuality. While these attitudes differ among the racial-ethnic groups, it can generally be stated that: (1) some beliefs about sexuality make rape an integral part of the dynamics of male-female interaction; (2) where blame or responsibility for rape is fixed, it is likely to be with the female because of her nature or sex-role behavior and with the male only if he is seen as mentally ill or emotionally disturbed; (3) feminist judgments about rape are associated with liberation and/or nontraditionality in sex roles.

In view of these findings, there is initial evidence to support the reconceptualization of rape as an experience comprised of far more than a victim's personal trouble. The victim's response - the degree of behavioral and emotional disruption that she experiences - can certainly be viewed as the intrinsic component of rape, yet it seems clear that community attitudes can also play a role, either in mitigating or contributing to the negative impact of her experience. It has been argued here that community responses to rape not only play a role, but, in fact, become a part of the rape experience. In a total sense, rape is seen as comprised of both the victim's experience in terms of its intrinsic meaning, and of community attitudes in terms of extrinsic meaning, attitudes which can serve as the foundation of either support or nonsupport for victims. Based on the findings presented here, further research should consider the proposition that while rape may precipitate a crisis for the victim, this is a compounded crisis of an extrinsic as well as intrinsic nature where the social context of rape cannot be ignored.

#### NOTES

1. The racial-ethnic identity terms used in this article are those used by a majority of the respondents in each of the three samples; as such, they may not coincide with identity labels used in other parts of the country.
2. For a detailed review of the victim methodology, see Holmes and Williams, 1979.
3. Since the initial preparation of this article, we have learned of some similar work done in Hawaii at about the same time as our research. Ruch and Chandler compared the impact of rape on Caucasian, Asian-American, and Hawaiian victims. Impact

was defined in terms of level (the degree to which the victim's life was affected) and type (the kinds of problems encountered as a result of the rape). Although no tests of statistical significance were reported, the authors conclude that both impact measures were found to differ for women from the different ethnic groups. As in our research, other variables did not systematically differentiate rape impact. While neither the ethnic-racial groups nor the impact measures are comparable with this work, the Ruch and Chandler research does tend to support our findings on the significance of race-ethnicity.

4. Crisis response was conceptualized to include three interrelated factors: (1) a hazardous event which poses some threat to the individual; (2) an inability to respond with adequate coping mechanisms; and (3) a resultant upset in the individual's usual pattern of functioning. This conceptualization is derived primarily from the work of Gerald Caplan and Lydia Rapoport.

5. The scale is comprised of ten groups of statements, each group reflecting one aspect of a crisis reaction. Victims were asked to rate each of the 60 statements as being more or less valid as descriptions of their current feelings/behavior compared with their feelings/behavior before the assault. Response categories were scored as: 0=much less true; 1=less true; 2=same as before or does not apply; 3=more true; 4=much more true. Presumably, the higher the Crisis Score (the sum of all item scores), the greater the degree of crisis. Examples of items are: My life is worthwhile; I like working; I worry a lot.

6. Victims were asked to respond by comparing their present feelings about men with their feelings about men before the assault. Response categories were scored as: 3=better; 2=about the same; 1=not as good. Scores from all five items were summed to yield a Feelings About Men (FAM) Score.

7. Victims were given a list of 11 health concerns and were asked to check each one that they had actually experienced since the assault. They were subsequently asked on an item-by-item basis whether they felt each concern they checked was specifically related to the rape. Victims were also allowed to add three concerns to the list and, where applicable, an earlier item related to alcohol use was included in scoring.

8. Only items which were applicable to nearly all respondents could be included in this measure; these were activities such as household cleaning, cooking, shopping or running errands, and visiting with friends or neighbors. Response categories were scored as: (+1)=more concerned; (0)=equally concerned; (-1)=less concerned with these activities now compared with before the rape. Or, on the item related to visiting, categories were: more time, about the same amount of time, less time spent engaged in this activity now compared with before the assault.

9. These variables were selectively included based on zero-order correlation coefficients. Age, family income, and years of education completed were coded to the nearest year or dollar. Both sex and religion were dummy-coded as dichotomous variables with religion treated simply as Catholic-other.

10. Included were two modified versions of sex-role indices developed by Kammeyer and two women's liberation indices developed by Williams. Responses were made on a four point (strongly agree to strongly disagree) Likert-type scale. Some representative items were: Women should have as much sexual freedom as men; In marriage, the husband should make the major decisions; Women are more emotional than men; Women should receive equal pay (with men) for equal work.

11. Responses were made on a four-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree)

to such items as: Most rapes could be avoided if women did not provoke them; Given the right situation, most men are capable of committing rape.

12. The Victimization Scores had a possible range of 0-3 based on a sum of experience with: (1) being a rape/sexual assault victim; (2) having a close friend or family member who was a victim of rape/sexual assault; and (3) being a victim of some other violent crime.

13. Discrimination Scores had a possible range of 4-16 based on strongly agree to strongly disagree responses to four items dealing with minority rape victims and minority males as accused rapists.

14. Interviewer feedback raised the question of content validity of the sex-roles and male-female sexuality items; they reported that many Mexican Americans, particularly females, had difficulty relating to these items. Chronbach's Standardized Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the sex roles items indicated only moderately high reliability: .66 for Anglos, .75 for Blacks, and a low of .57 for Mexican Americans. Coefficients for the sexuality items were slightly higher, but still moderately correlated for all groups. The problem of reliability-validity was controlled to some extent by factor analyzing the sex-role and sexuality items for each sample, then using those factors (rather than the indices comprised of all items) in subsequent statistical analyses.

15. Parameters for the regression were set as:  $n=14$ ;  $F=2.0$ ;  $T=.30$ .

16. Where the F-test was significant, an additional statistical procedure (a priori contrasts, a t-test option) was used to determine which groups accounted for the association. On Crisis Scores, Anglos and Blacks differed significantly ( $t=2.2$ ,  $df=58$ ,  $p<.04$ ) as did Blacks and Mexican Americans ( $t=3.4$ ,  $df=58$ ,  $p<.001$ ); on FAM Scores, only Anglos and Mexican Americans differed significantly ( $t=3.7$ ,  $df=58$ ,  $p<.001$ ); and on the General Functioning Scores, both Anglo-Mexican American ( $t=2.2$ ,  $df=53$ ,  $p<.03$ ) and Black-Mexican American ( $t=2.5$ ,  $df=53$ ,  $p<.02$ ) contrasts were significant.

17. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Discrimination Scores, when examined by composition, were largely the result of perceived discrimination against minority males accused of raping white women.

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